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(30) Priority: **26.12.1996 US 774970**

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(54) Stent fabrication method and apparatus

(57) A stent and a method for fabricating the stent are disclosed. The stent has an originally flat pattern and connection points where the sides of the flat pattern are joined. The method includes the steps of a) cutting a stent pattern into a flat piece of metal thereby to produce a metal pattern, b) deforming the metal pattern so as to cause two opposing sides to meet, and c) joining the two opposing sides at least at one point. Substantially no portion of the stent projects into the lumen of the stent when the stent is expanded against the internal wall of a blood vessel.

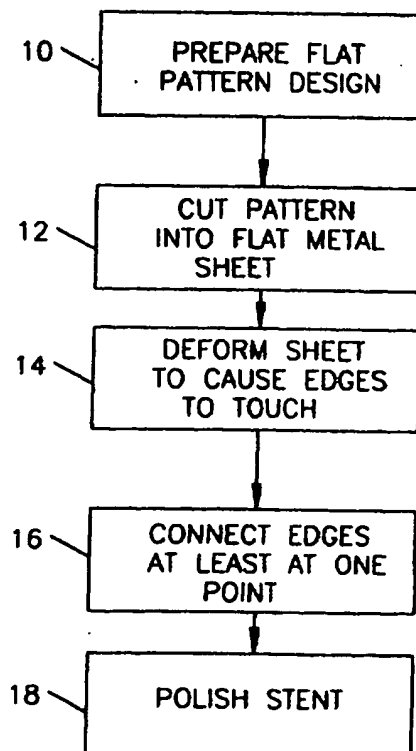


FIG. 1

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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

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EP 97 12 2841

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
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A	* claim 1; figure 6 *	20,24	

X	US 4 513 596 A (USHER GEORGE R) 30 April 1985 (1985-04-30)	1	
A	* claim 1; figures 1,2 *	8,20,24	

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	* figure 14 *		

-The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 24 October 2002	Examiner Ritter, F
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons</p> <p>& : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

EPO FORM 1503 (03.02) (P04C01)



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CLAIMS INCURRING FEES

The present European patent application comprised at the time of filing more than ten claims.

- ☐ Only part of the claims have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims and for those claims for which claims fees have been paid, namely claim(s):
- ☐ No claims fees have been paid within the prescribed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for the first ten claims.

LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION

The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

see sheet B

- ☐ All further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for all claims.
- ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the Search Division did not invite payment of any additional fee.
- ☐ Only part of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the inventions in respect of which search fees have been paid, namely claims:
- ☒ None of the further search fees have been paid within the fixed time limit. The present European search report has been drawn up for those parts of the European patent application which relate to the invention first mentioned in the claims, namely claims:

1-7, 8-19, 20-23, 24-26, 32-58, 67-93, 94-100, 101-127



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**LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B**

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The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

1. Claims: 1-7, 8-19, 20-23, 24-26, 32-58, 67-93, 94-100, 101-127

The subject-matter of claim 94 is a sheet for fabricating a stent. The technical effect achieved by the feature that each pair of the first long side engagement points is provided with a bridge is an increased stability of the pattern formed in the sheet, whereby the alignment of the engagement points during manufacturing of the stent is facilitated.

The subject-matter of claims 32, 67 and 101 is a method of fabricating a stent. In all of these claims the sheet to be formed into the stent is provided with the bridge between the pair of the first long side engagement points, whereby the technical effect mentioned above for the sheet is obtained.

The subject-matter of claims 1, 24, 8 and 20 is an apparatus suitable for carrying out the methods of fabricating a stent.

2. Claims: 27-31

The subject-matter of claim 27 is a stent aligning and welding jig. The problem to be solved by the features of this claim consists in a good parallel alignment of the long sides of the rolled sheet before welding.

3. Claims: 59, 60-66

The subject-matter of claim 60 is a method of electropolishing a stent. The technical problem to be solved by the features that the electrically conductive member contacts the external surface of the stent is a reduction of the likelihood of the occurrence of undulations and erosion lines on the surface defining the longitudinal bore of the stent.

The subject-matter of claim 59 is a jig for electropolishing a tubular stent, suitable for carrying out the method of claim 60. The problem solved is the same as mentioned above for claim 60.

4. Claims: 128-137

The subject-matter of claim 128 is a stent. The technical effect achieved by the feature that the weld is wider than the other portions of the stent is the provision of an increased amount of welding material, which results in a



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**LACK OF UNITY OF INVENTION
SHEET B**

Application Number
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The Search Division considers that the present European patent application does not comply with the requirements of unity of invention and relates to several inventions or groups of inventions, namely:

stronger weld.

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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